

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OC-06 CCO-00 A-01 L-03 CPR-01  
AID-05 SS-15 SP-02 SCA-01 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00  
/052 W

-----271821Z 013278 /50

P 271452Z APR 77

FM AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6139

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUJUMBURA 0451

E.O.: 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDIP, ACOM, BY

SUBJ: CUSTOMS PROBLEMS IN BURUNDI

REF : BUJUMBURA 413, BUJUMBURA 420

1. BY DOGGING FINANCE MINISTER SHIRAMANGA OUTSIDE OF OFFICE HOURS IN RECENT DAYS (SINCE PROTOCOL HAS NEVER COME THROUGH WITH AN APPOINTMENT BETWEEN US), I HAVE MANAGED TO GET HIM TO FOCUS ON OUR CUSTOMS PROBLEMS IN REFTELS. THUS, TODAY HE TOLD ME THAT HE HAD ORDERED CUSTOMS TO RELEASE THE 19 DIPLOMATIC POUCHES RETAINED SINCE MARCH 31. HE SAID THAT PROBLEM HAD ARISEN BECAUSE OF LACK OF PRECISION IN SOME OF TERMS OF VIENNA CONVENTION. WHEN I PRESSED HIM TO TELL ME WHICH WORDS WERE UNCLEAR, SINCE THE PROVISIONS SEEMED VERY DEFINITE TO ME (AND ALL IN OUR FAVOR), HE DEMURRED AND SUGGESTED THAT I TAKE MATTER UP AGAIN WITH FOREIGN OFFICE. I THANKED HIM FOR HIS DECISION AND EXPRESSED HOPE HIS CUSTOMS SERVICE WOULD NOW STOP TRYING TO HARASS THIS EMBASSY AND THUS DETERMINE BURUNDI'S FOREIGN POLICY IN BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH U.S.

2. SHIRAMANGA DID NOT RPT NOT AT SAME TIME SETTLE PROBLEM MENTIONED PARA 4 REFTEL (413) OF INSISTING ON OPENING UP FOR INSPECTION PERSONAL EFFECTS OF EMBASSY OFFICERS ON  
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DIPLOMATIC LIST. CURRENT VICTIM OF THIS ACTION IS USAID OFFICER LAMBACHER, AND WE HAVE STILL NOT AUTHORIZED CUSTOMS TO MAKE INSPECTION, PENDING YOUR VIEWS ON HOW FIRMLY TO STICK TO THIS PRINCIPLE, GIVEN FACT THAT OTHER EMBASSIES ARE NOT SUBJECTED TO THIS PRACTICE.

3. I THINK IT WOULD STILL BE GOOD IDEA FOR YOU TO HAVE

TALK WITH AMBASSADOR NZEYIMANA ABOUT CUSTOMS' ACTIONS HERE. HE IS PERSONALLY SENSITIVE TO THESE MATTERS, SINCE, BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE FOR WASHINGTON ON ASSIGNMENT, HE MADE POINT OF ASKING DCM ISOM HERE TO ENSURE THAT HIS BAGGAGE AND EFFECTS WOULD NOT RPT NOT BE OPENED FOR CUSTOMS INSPECTION IN U.S. HOWEVER, CHIEF OF PROTOCOL HERE HAS TOLD LAMBACHER THAT CUSTOMS (WITH PROTOCOL'S SUPPORT) WILL INSIST ON INSPECTING UNACCOMPANIED EFFECTS OF U.S. DIPLOMATS HERE AND THAT BURUNDI GOVERNMENT DOES NOT RPT NOT AT ALL CARE WHETHER WE APPLY RECIPROCITY ON THIS IN WASHINGTON.

4. I DID RAISE HARASSMENT BY CUSTOMS VERY STRONGLY IN A LONG INFORMAL TALK THAT I HAD WITH PUBLIC WORKS MINISTER NYABOYA AT HIS HOME ON APRIL 25, AND HE PROMISED TO TRY TO GET A USEFUL WORD IN EDGEWISE WITH RELEVANT AUTHORITIES (INDEED, HE MAY HAVE TALKED TO SHIRAMANGA IN INTERIM). NYABOYA'S LINE IS THAT CUSTOMS SERVICE IS STILL FILLED WITH PRE-BAGAZA OFFICERS, MANY OF WHOM ARE CORRUPT AS WELL AS NASTY AND INEFFICIENT. I LEARN FROM MANY BUSINESS CONTACTS IN BUJUMBURA THAT BOTH THESE OLD OFFICERS AND A FEW NEW APPOINTEES ARE STILL TAKING BRIBES RIGHT AND LEFT IN PAYMENT FOR EXPEDITIOUS PROCESSING OF CUSTOMS CLEARANCES. HEAD OF FRENCH AID MISSION HERE SAYS HE HAS NO DOUBT THAT CUSTOMS HARASSMENT OF OUR SHIPMENTS IS AN EFFORT TO GET US TO START BRIBING THEM FOR RAPID CLEARANCE. THIS MAY BE TRUE, THOUGH I FIND IT HARD TO IMAGINE THAT EVEN BURUNDIAN CUSTOMS OFFICIALS COULD REALLY THINK THAT AMERICAN EMBASSY WOULD JOIN IN THE UNIVERSAL CORRUPTION. MOREOVER, IT IS APPARENT THAT AT LEAST SOME OFFICIALS IN FONOFF (SUCH AS PROTOCOL  
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CHIEF) FAVOR A HARDER LINE AGAINST DIPLOMATS.

5. NOW THAT POUCHES ARE RELEASED, I PLAN TO SEND FORMAL NOTE TO MINISTRY OBSERVING THAT HARASSMENTS (POUCHES AND MY GROCERIES) CAUSE MUCH ILL WILL EVEN IF TROUBLE IS BELATEDLY SOLVED. BESIDES, THERE IS STILL PROBLEM OF INSPECTING ROUTINELY ALL UNACCOMPANIED PERSONAL EFFECTS OF DIPLOMATS. I WILL SAY THAT SUCH HAPPENINGS RUN COUNTER TO SPIRIT OF CLOSER COOPERATION NOW DEVELOPING BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES, WHICH OF COURSE PRESUPPOSES NORMAL FUNCTIONING OF EMBASSIES. I WILL END BY ASKING FONOFF TO INFORM US OF ANY SPECIFIC PROBLEMS WHICH THEY FEEL ARE NOT CLEARLY REGULATED BY VIENNA CONVENTION SO THAT THESE MAY BE DISCUSSED. PERHAPS ANSWER (IF ANY) TO THIS NOTE PLUS YOUR OWN CONVERSATION WITH NZEYIMANA WILL LAY BASIS FOR ENDING THESE PERIODIC HARASSMENTS HERE.

6. I SHOULD NOTE THAT OTHER WESTERN AMBASSADORS WANT TO GET DEAN OF DIPLOMATIC CORPS HERE (PAPAL NUNCIO) TO MAKE FORMAL INTERVENTION TO FONOFF ON THESE MATTERS. I AM NOT

RPT NOT SURE HE WILL WANT TO DO SO, AND, IN ANY EVENT,  
HE WILL NOT BE SPEAKING FOR COMMUNIST EMBASSIES AND PERHAPS  
SOME OTHERS TOO.  
MARK

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## Message Attributes

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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
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**Reference:** 77 BUJUMBURA 413, 77 BUJUMBURA 420  
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**Type:** TE  
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**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
22 May 2009  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009